

## INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR AND GROUP DYNAMICS OF WSHG'S IN PURI DISTRICT OF ODISHA

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### ABSTRACT

This study seeks to explore the effectiveness of group dynamics among the SHG members and evaluate the information seeking behaviour amongst them. Empowerment of women in this context is of the great importance being given to the group approach while conceptualizing any programme for rural women. The study is conducted in District Puri in Odisha State, a state which faces the conundrum of rapid economic growth juxtaposed with poor social indicators, and uses the personal narrative method to give a voice to women's perspective. The study looks at various dimensions of empowerment – material, cognitive, perceptual and relational. Women Self Help Groups and 120 respondents, out of which 60 were members of SHG while rest 60 were non members.

**KEYWORDS:** Information Seeking Behaviour and Group Dynamics of WSHG'S in Puri

### INTRODUCTION

The new millennium has thrown many challenges subjecting many nations to undergo transformation cutting across their established tradition and culture. New issues have to be addressed to effect social and economical progress of our nation. The most important one is women empowerment through self help groups. Fast growing populations tend toward deprivation by default. Increasing population densities have also rendered lives of people inevitably interdependent, offering little scope for segregation. Even social factors like religion, region, language, culture etc serve as ready fractures for strife in times of deprivation. In such scenarios, in the absence of social paradigms for peaceful, synergistic and productive human co-existence, life eventually tends to become predatory. Reciprocity is one of the basic tendencies of nature and man has, time and again, consciously forged mutually fulfilling relationships. One such mechanism in recent years in our country has been the Self Help Groups. Remarkably it is the women in India which have dominated this socio-economic phenomenon and have rendered it a promising vehicle for development vindicating what Dr. Mohamed Yunus, Economist and Nobel laureate, founder of the Gramin Bank of Bangladesh observed decades earlier, that "women are good social investors and give more mileage to the rupee earned".

Among total Indian population of 1027.10 million, women constitute 495.73 million. Therefore, "women constitute nearly 50 per cent of population, perform two-thirds of the work and produce 50 per cent of food commodities consumed by the country. They earn one third of remuneration and own 10 per cent of the property or wealth of the country" (Reddy *et al.* 1994). Rural women in India constitute 77.00 per cent of the female population (Jhamtani, 1995). They share abundant responsibility and perform a wide spectrum of duties in running the family, maintaining the household activities like rearing, feeding, attending to farm labour, tending domestic animals and the like, even then they suffer from being both economically and socially invisible.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for the present study was ex post-facto design, since phenomenon had already taken place. Ex post-facto research is a systematic empirical inquiry in which, the researcher does not have direct control over independent variables because either their manifestations has already occurred or they are not inherently manipulated (Kerlinger, 1996).

Keeping the objectives of the study in view more of qualitative and behavioral attributes were included in the study. Survey research was considered in the study. Survey research method was considered most appropriate to gather data on profile of WSHG members under the study. Multiphase sampling techniques was adopted to select the district, block and village under study.

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## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Information Seeking Behaviour of the SHG Members

Use of information sources/channels which are essential for the reception of messages cannot be ruled out, if the system has to be effective. Therefore an attempt was made to judge various kinds of sources/channel, extent of information drawn from each source/channel and usefulness of those information to the activity of SHG.

Information Seeking Behaviour of SHG members related to their SHG activities were assessed in three parts. These are as follows:

- Source/channel of information used by SHG members.
- Extent of information drawn from different sources/ channel of information by SHG members.
- Usefulness of information as perceived by the SHG members.
- Source/channel of information used by SHG members.

All the sources have been broadly classified into two, viz, formal source and informal source. The table below clearly indicated that NGO/ facilitator, member of the other groups were the main informal sources of information. Neighbours and family members were also important source of information and ranked them as third and fourth among the informal source of information. The findings seem to be logical because the NGO/ facilitator were directly contacted with the SHG members. NGO/ facilitator helps in SHG formation and keep the SHG members duly updated with important information related to the SHG activities.

As per formal sources of information is concerned training ranked first, bank, exhibition and programme officials were the other most quoted sources of information. Newspaper, magazines and programme officials were the least cited source of information among the members of SHG related to their SHG activities.

The findings seem to be logical because of the reason that training to SHG members in different field were enough to provide the latest technical know how with convincing reasons. Television and exhibition provide wide coverage with rationality. A particularly revelation as radio and newspaper were least cited sources of information by the SHG members. Most of the respondents lost the habit of reading newspaper because they were from the interior village and the accessibility to market is not that easy. Television has replaced radios, so its importance is more when compared to radios.

**Table 1: Source/Channel of Information Used By SHG Members**

| Sources of Information          | Frequency of Respondents in Different Preferences |                |                | N=60             |            |
|---------------------------------|---|----------------|----------------|------------------|------------|
|                                 | Most of Times (3)                                 | Some Times (2) | Less Times (1) | Total Rank Score | Rank Order |
| <b>Informal Source/ Channel</b> |   |                |                |                  |            |
| Member of the other groups      | 38  | 12             | 10             | 148              | 2          |
| Family members                  | 14  | 33             | 13             | 121              | 4          |
| Friends                         | 16  | 20             | 24             | 112              | 5          |
| Relatives                       | 12  | 26             | 22             | 110              | 6          |
| Neighbor                        | 16  | 36             | 8              | 128              | 3          |
| Local leaders                   | 12  | 14             | 34             | 98               | 7          |
| NGO/Facilitator                 | 42  | 14             | 4              | 158              | 1          |
| <b>Formal Source Channel</b>    |   |                |                |                  |            |
| Bank                            | 18  | 24             | 18             | 120              | 5          |
| Programme official              | 19  | 29             | 12             | 127              | 2          |
| VLW                             | 12  | 15             | 33             | 99               | 8          |
| Training                        | 21  | 27             | 12             | 129              | 1          |
| Exhibition                      | 19  | 21             | 20             | 119              | 4          |
| Radio                           | 15  | 32             | 13             | 122              | 3          |
| Television                      | 18  | 22             | 20             | 118              | 6          |
| Newspaper /Magazines            | 12  | 22             | 26             | 106              | 7          |

- Extent of Information Drawn from Different Sources/ Channel of Information by SHG Members**

Table 2 depicts the data on the extent information drawn from different sources/ channel of information by SHG members. The table below clearly indicates that NGO/ facilitator, member of the other groups ranked first and second among informal sources of information. Neighbours and friends were also important source of extracting information and ranked them as third and fourth among the informal source of information.

As far as formal sources of information is concerned, Programme Official and Training ranked first and second respectively. Newspaper, magazines and television were the other important cited source of information among the members of SHG related to their SHG activities.

**Table 2: Extent of Information Drawn from Different Sources/ Channel of Information by SHG Members**

| Sources of Information          | Frequency of Respondents in Different Preferences |                |                | N=60             |            |
|---------------------------------|---|----------------|----------------|------------------|------------|
|                                 | Most of Times (3)                                 | Some Times (2) | Less Times (1) | Total Rank Score | Rank Order |
| <b>Informal Source/ Channel</b> |   |                |                |                  |            |
| Member of the other groups      | 41  | 15             | 4              | 157              | I          |
| Family members                  | 15  | 21             | 24             | 111              | XI         |
| Friends                         | 14  | 34             | 12             | 122              | VII        |
| Relatives                       | 11  | 26             | 23             | 108              | XII        |
| Neighbor                        | 15  | 36             | 9              | 126              | IV         |
| Local leaders                   | 13  | 13             | 34             | 99               | XIV        |
| NGO/Facilitator                 | 39  | 11             | 10             | 149              | II         |
| <b>Formal Source Channel</b>    |   |                |                |                  |            |
| Bank                            | 12  | 14             | 34             | 98               | XV         |
| Programme official              | 21  | 26             | 13             | 128              | III        |
| VLW                             | 19  | 23             | 18             | 121              | VIII       |
| Training                        | 18  | 29             | 13             | 125              | V          |
| Exhibition                      | 19  | 19             | 22             | 117              | X          |
| Radio                           | 14  | 19             | 27             | 107              | XIII       |
| Television                      | 15  | 30             | 15             | 120              | IX         |
| Newspaper /Magazines            | 20  | 23             | 17             | 123              | VI         |

Among both the formal and informal sources NGO/facilitator, members of other group, programme official, neighbours were given highest rank as compared to other sources. Least information was found to be drawn from bank, radio, local leader and relatives. So it seems that respondents major criteria for consulting a source was the extent of knowledge gained from them. Interaction with communication channel a pre-requisite for reception of information or awareness cannot be ensured if they are out of public reach or use.

- Usefulness of Information as Perceived by the SHG Members.**

Table 3 depicts that among informal sources NGO/facilitator, members of the other group, family members and neighbor were found to have supplied more useful information as perceived by SHG members. However sources like friends, relatives and local leaders from whom maximum information had been drawn were perceived to have supplied less useful information.

Regarding the formal source of information training, programme official, bank and radio were found to have supplied more useful information as perceived by SHG members. Among both formal and informal sources of information, NGO/facilitator, members of other group, training were found to have supplied more useful information as perceived by SHG members.

**Table 3: Usefulness of Information as Perceived by the SHG Members.**

| Sources of Information          | Frequency of Respondents in Different Preferences |                     |                 | N=60             |            |
|---------------------------------|---|---------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------|
|                                 | Most Useful (3)                                   | Somewhat Useful (2) | Less Useful (1) | Total Rank Score | Rank Order |
| <b>Informal Source/ Channel</b> |   |                     |                 |                  |            |
| Member of the other groups      | 38  | 12                  | 10              | 148              | II         |

| <b>Table 3: Contd.,</b>      |    |    |    |     |   |      |
|------------------------------|----|----|----|-----|---|------|
| Family members               | 19 | 30 | 11 | 128 | 3 | V    |
| Friends                      | 13 | 34 | 13 | 120 | 5 | VII  |
| Relatives                    | 12 | 24 | 24 | 108 | 6 | XII  |
| Neighbor                     | 20 | 24 | 16 | 124 | 4 | VII  |
| Local leaders                | 13 | 10 | 37 | 96  | 7 | XIV  |
| NGO/Facilitator              | 42 | 9  | 9  | 153 | 1 | I    |
| <b>Formal Source Channel</b> |    |    |    |     |   |      |
| Bank                         | 16 | 24 | 20 | 116 | 3 | VIII |
| Programme official           | 21 | 27 | 12 | 129 | 2 | IV   |
| VLW                          | 12 | 15 | 33 | 99  | 8 | XIV  |
| Training                     | 25 | 25 | 10 | 135 | 1 | III  |
| Exhibition                   | 12 | 21 | 27 | 105 | 7 | XIII |
| Radio                        | 11 | 32 | 17 | 114 | 4 | IX   |
| Television                   | 15 | 22 | 23 | 112 | 6 | XI   |
| Newspaper /Magazines         | 15 | 23 | 22 | 113 | 5 | X    |

These findings are relevant because these informal and formal sources had got high intensity of influence in matters of understanding the messages and conviction leading to acceptance of usefulness of information about group activities.

### Communication Profile of SHG Members

- Extension contacts of the respondents revealed that the SHG members was categorized in to low, medium and high. It was observed that nearly 73.34 percent of the SHG members had medium extension contact whereas 18.33 percent had high contacts and mere 8.33 percent members had low extension contact.
- Exposure of mass media indicates the degree of progressiveness of the members in SHG. It was found that revealed that higher percentage of SHG members i.e. 43.33 percent had high exposure to mass media whereas 30 percent members had low exposure while only 26.67 percent members had medium exposure to mass media.
- Cosmopoliteness localiteness of SHG members revealed that about 55 percent tended to be cosmopolite in nature followed by 23.3 percent in the category of localite (low) and rest of the respondents ie 21.7 percent were falling under transitional orientation (medium category).

### CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of the findings, it could be concluded that the members of SHG had medium level of Information Communication Behaviour and it was influenced by member's education, family size, extension contact, mass media exposure, cosmopoliteness localiteness, economic motivation and innovation proneness. Group Dynamic Effectiveness among SHG members was influenced by number of training attended, cosmopoliteness localiteness, economic motivation. Members of SHG were more empowered in all the spheres of their socio-economic and political life than the non members.

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